

Original article

The Positive Effects of Parents' Mental Illness on Their Children: a Qualitative Study

Zeighami R¹, Oskouie F², Joolae S³

Abstract:

Objective: The main objective of this research is to explore the positive consequences of parents' mental illness on their children. **Material & methods:** This study was a part of a more comprehensive study performed based on grounded theory. In this work semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 participants selected by purposeful and theoretical sampling approach. Data were analyzed using constant comparative analysis suggested by Straus and Corbin (1988) method. **Results:** Despite negative effects of the illness, the children have been perceived positive effects from their parents' illness. These findings categorized in two category of "independence" and "considering the others needs". **Conclusion:** Application of these findings in care plan of patients and families, particularly their children, can offer more efficient coping with mental illness.

Keywords: child; mental illnesses; grounded theory; positive aspects; posttraumatic growth; stress related growth

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Background

Mental illnesses, which are seen almost in all societies and communities¹, are among widespread problems in contemporary societies². The average worldwide prevalence of this illness is 20 cases for every 100 normal populations per annum³. In Iran, prevalence of mental illness is estimated as 20 %⁴, where about 1 % of them need hospitalization services⁵. Disregarding high spread of these problems, it must be noticed that their consequences are not limited to only to the patients but is involves all the society⁶. In families who have patients with mental illness the children are in critical situation. These children face with various problems which might be less noticed, as this group is called "hidden population" susceptible to the mental illness⁷. It is generally believed that giving healthcare services for these children is a section which is generally neglected by the health care systems⁸.

The studies conducted on children of patients with mental illness are mainly about consequences and negative effects of the illness on them and less attention is paid to the potential positive effects of the illness on children⁹. It is no surprise that why mental illnesses have demonstrated a negative image in mind of society¹⁰ and why they have this much widespread stigma¹¹. However, there are also few studies focused on positive aspects of mental illnesses¹². Regarding less deal of studies conducted on children of patients with mental illness, particularly in its positive aspects, in this paper a qualitative research was conducted on Iranian patients. It must be noticed that this study just reports the positive aspects of parents' mental illness and the other findings, pattern, and the emerged theory will be separately discussed in another paper.

Method

This study was a part of a more comprehensive study conducted based on grounded theory approach. The

1. Zeighami Reza, Assistant Professor of Qazvin University of Medical Sciences, Qazvin, Iran,
2. Oskouie Fatemeh, Associate Professor, Center for Nursing Care Research, School of Nursing & Midwifery, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.
3. Joolae Soodabeh, Associate Professor, Centre for Nursing Care Research, School of Nursing & Midwifery, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Nosrat St., Tohid Sq., Tehran, Iran

Corresponds to: Oskouie Fatemeh, Associate Professor, Center for Nursing Care Research, School of Nursing & Midwifery, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran. **Email:** fhaghdost@tums.ac.ir